



AUCKLAND WAR MEMORIAL MUSEUM

NEWS

Auckland Institute and Museum
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Sixty Years On

On Thursday 28th November 1929, the Auckland War Memorial Museum was opened by His Excellency the Governor-General Sir Charles Fergusson. The building was consecrated to those who had enlisted in the Auckland Province and been killed during World War I. In November 1989, the Auckland War Memorial Museum, now extended by the World War II War Memorial building and the Auditorium, is sixty years old.

The building was the memorial, but it was also the new home for the Auckland Institute and Museum, established in 1867, and for the collections which had their origins in the Auckland Museum opened in 1852. So in marking the jubilee of the building, we celebrate the progress of the Institute and Museum.

The building was designed by the Auckland architects H.C.Grierson,

K.W.Aimer and M.K.Draffin, who were selected from the 76 entries in the international competition. The completed building was immediately recognised as a major architectural achievement, winning for its creators the Gold Medal of the New Zealand Institute of Architects in 1929.

The Museum's needs in serving the public have changed over the years, and there have been a number of modifications to internal spaces. The Museum has however always been mindful of the great architectural treasure which it occupies. Any alterations are carried out as sympathetically as possible.

The Museum Council has also been mindful of the need to preserve and protect the building, and the heritage it contains in the Museum's collections. Regular maintenance tasks have been undertaken over the years. A major

Maori Welcoming Party at the Museum Opening 1929

programme of maintenance, cleaning and development of the building was begun in 1988. Part of this work involves the preparation of a conservation plan for the building, and staged refurbishing and repairs to the building fabric and its interiors.

Auckland Institute and Museum is immensely proud of its fine building, which a leading Australian conservation architect has described as "the finest Greek revival building in the Southern Hemisphere". We applaud the vision of those who created it, those who financed it, and those who have administered it. We are working hard to ensure that in another 60 years, and indeed another 160 years, the Auckland War Memorial Museum will still be a source of pride, of education and of pleasure to the people of Auckland, and their visitors from other parts of New Zealand and overseas.

Archaeology Department

The Museum holds many important archaeological collections which are available for display and study. These come especially from the Auckland region but also from Samoa, Tonga, Pitcairn, the Kermadec Islands as well as from other districts in New Zealand.

What gives the collections sense and value is their historical context - the locality and site, and, if properly excavated, the precise location and archaeological layer within a site, from which items have come.

The Museum's Archaeology Department is only two decades old. It was established in response to the development of scientific archaeology in Auckland from the mid-1950s when

newly appointed teaching staff at Auckland University and a growing number of graduates revolutionised archaeology in our region. The Museum clearly wished to be part of this and also saw itself as providing a suitable home for the important collections now being excavated.

The first E. Earle Vaile Archaeologist, Auckland graduate Janet Davidson, took up her position in June 1966. The salary - and hence the title - comes from funds given and bequeathed for that purpose by E. Earle Vaile. Present archaeologist Nigel Prickett joined the staff in April 1979.

The basis and chief pleasure of archaeology is fieldwork. This includes

reconnaissance, mapping and excavation. But a museum archaeologist can never be in the field as much as might be wished. There are other jobs to do. 'Housekeeping' the growing collections, assisting in display development, answering public enquiries, speaking to groups, and writing up the results of previous fieldwork take up most time.

Nigel Prickett

The end of another dig — Raupa (Paeroa), February 1987. Excavation equipment is got ready for packing into the vans and return to Auckland.

Auckland Museum Library Closure

The Museum Library will be closed between Monday 27th November 1989 and Saturday 9th December 1989 inclusive. It will re-open at 1pm on Monday 11 December 1989.

During this time Library staff will attempt to catch up on a backlog of administrative and organisational tasks which are not possible during opening hours.

We apologise if this closure causes any inconvenience to our Members and other Library users, but it is essential for the efficient running and maintenance of the Library's collections.

If you wish to return Library books during this period there will be a book collection unit on the ground floor of the Administration area near Reception.

Ornithology Department

The ornithology collection contains about 13,000 bird specimens, including some 10,000 study-skins and mounted birds, 2,000 eggs and 1,000 skeletal specimens (including moas). The department also houses 1,300 amphibians and reptiles, and 500 land mammals. The collection's main strength is as a reference collection of New Zealand species, but perhaps the most important single collection, historically and scientifically, is the bird

material collected from Antarctica and the Subantarctic islands by R.A. Falla on the British, Australian, New Zealand Antarctic Research Expedition of 1929-31.

The oldest specimens in the collection are: a lizard collected in the Bay of Islands in 1841 (see Museum News 15), moa eggshell fragments collected by W.B.D. Mantell in 1847-48 and 1852, and - all collected in 1870 - a Brown

Kiwi, New Zealand Snipe and antelope bones (from Ethiopia). At the opening of the building in 1929, the Hall of New Zealand Birds, containing the best mounted specimens, some in habitat groups, was in the gallery now occupied by English furniture.

At about the time of the shift to the 1929 building the Museum had grown to the extent that additional specialist curators were needed, rather than a general

curator of all museum specimens. The first specialist was R.A. Falla who joined the Museum in 1935 when he became Director. He was followed by R. Turbott (our current Director) from 1937 to 1959. Turbott was a pioneer of bird preservation. Acting Ornithologist from 1960 to 1968 when he was absent on war service, Associate Ornithologist from his death in 1959 to his day-to-day care of the collection from 1960 to 1968 when he was appointed in 1968 (Zoology). From 1968 the department was run by Associate Ornithologist McKenzie and later by full-time curator appointed in 1979 and technician (Jennifer

In recent years the focus has been into improving the quality of the documentation and the methods of specimen preparations are being computerised.

B.J. Gill

An early Museum collection showing brown

Ethnology

A glance at the early collection in 1929, the first to be housed in the War Memorial Museum, reveals some interesting items for the Ethnology Department. Among the feather-box once owned by Rangihaeata to the extensive collection of items from New Zealand Maori and Melanesia formerly owned by the now famous prow and stern from a Waikato leader, a Herangi present that once belonged to Te Toki a Tapiri, the new building acquisitions are a way that the ethnology has continued to grow in sixty years, reflecting the people of the Auckland region beyond in their numbers. Especially notable in the collection are the items placed on



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curator of all museum objects and his assistant, who had hitherto managed the collections. The first ornithologist was R.A. Falla who served from 1928 to 1935 when he became assistant Director. He was succeeded by E. G. Turbott (our current Director Emeritus) from 1937 to 1957. G.A. Buddle, a local pioneer of bird photography, was Acting Ornithologist while Turbott was absent on war service, and part-time Associate Ornithologist from 1945 until his death in 1951. Lois Wagener had day-to-day care of the collection from 1960 to 1968 while she was Recorder (Zoology). From 1968 to 1981 the department was run by part-time Associate Ornithologists (Ross McKenzie and later Sylvia Reed). A full-time curator (Brian Gill) was appointed in 1982, and a part-time technician (Jenny Oats) in 1987.

In recent years much work has gone into improving the organisation and documentation of the collections, and preparations are well under way to computerise the catalogues.

B.J. Gill

An early Museum habitat group, showing brown Kiwis



Ethnology Department

A glance at the Annual Report for 1928 - 1929, the first to be issued from the new War Memorial Museum building, reveals some interesting acquisitions for the Ethnology collections in that year. Among them was a very large feather-box once presented by Te Rangihaeata to Sir George Grey, an extensive collection of ethnographic items from New Guinea, a collection of Maori and Melanesian artefacts formerly owned by Rev. Dr John Kinder, and the now famous archaic canoe prow and stern from Doubtless Bay. The Waikato leader, Princess Te Puea Herangi presented an old canoe bailer that once belonged to the war canoe Te Toki a Tapiri, now securely housed in the new building. These new acquisitions are representative of the way that the ethnographic collection has continued to grow over the past sixty years, reflecting the pride of the people of the Auckland region and beyond in their new Museum. Especially notable in the Auckland collection are the number of Maori items placed on deposit for

safekeeping by their Maori individual and tribal owners, ranging from the complete meeting house, Hotunui, to small greenstone pendants with a long distinguished history.



Canoe Prow, Doubtless Bay

As a result of this local support, the Auckland Museum now houses the most representative collection of Maori artefacts in the world, including most of the surviving archaic Northland woodcarvings. The Auckland Museum Pacific Islands collections are the largest in New Zealand numbering 21,000 out of a total of 57,000 objects in all the New Zealand museums. But while the heart of the Ethnology

Department is the magnificent collections stored there, the measure of our success is what we do with those collections; how we make them accessible and understandable to the public and how we care for them for future generations. Recent developments in the storage of the Maori carvings and the new storeroom and cabinets designed for the Maori cloaks are part of this process. The next significant advance will be the rehousing of the Pacific and other ethnographic collections, at present still held in outdated cupboards.

For the general public, the display galleries are the most obvious results of our efforts, and the Auckland Museum Maori galleries have always been justly famous. Although the central Maori gallery still follows the essential configuration of major items established in 1929, recent alterations and renovations have now given this area a new appearance. The totally new Nga Mahi displays in the west Maori gallery will soon be

Auckland War Memorial Museum was erected in the Auckland Domain in 1929 and extended in 1960 as the Memorial to those from Auckland Province who died in two World Wars. It is administered by the Auckland Institute and Museum, whose origins go back to the first Auckland Museum of 1852. Auckland Museum News is issued free to members of the Institute and Museum, a group of friends and supporters to the Museum.

complemented by a new display of Maori tribal arts and history in the east gallery, organised for the first time according to their tribal and geographical relationships. Taking pride of place in the Horowhenua area of the new gallery will be that feather box belonging to Te Rangihaeata, presented to the Museum in 1929.

In addition to these permanent displays, special temporary exhibitions allow us to concentrate more closely on selected topics and provide an opportunity for the public to see sections of the collection not normally on display. Te Aho Tapu and Mats of the Pacific have been just two of the most popular recent special exhibitions. Future plans for special exhibitions include several focusing on particular cultures of the Pacific, especially those islands strongly represented in the modern population of Auckland.

Research and publication based on the ethnographic collections has been a strong tradition at Auckland Museum, leading to many important publications over the last sixty years, both by staff members and other writers. However, as I write this, a totally new type of publication venture is about to be launched from the Kokohuia Marae at Hokianga. This is an inventory of Te Tai Tokerau artefacts held in the Auckland Museum, compiled by a young Maori researcher employed through the Runanganui o Te Tai Tokerau. This new co-operative experiment is a result of the close relationship maintained over the last sixty years between Maori people and the Museum which cares for some of their greatest treasures.

Any success which has been achieved in all these endeavours over the past sixty years is the outcome of teamwork by the staff, by many volunteers and by the public who have supported their Museum.

Roger Neich

The Museum Officers and Council

At the Annual General Meeting the

President Mrs Sheila Weight announced that the Council had elected Mr W A Laxon as President and Dr H V Coop as Vice-President for the ensuing year. Mrs Weight will therefore become Past President. Mrs Weight also noted that Mr Russell Thomas will no longer be Past President, but he will remain a member of the Council ex-officio in his capacity as Chairman of the Trust Board.

In taking the Chair at the conclusion of the AGM, Mr Laxon expressed the thanks of the members to Mrs Weight for her very active involvement as a "hands-on" President during her term of three years. There had been a number of difficult issues faced by the Council during that time, and the Museum owed a debt of gratitude to Mrs Weight for her guidance of the Council and the Museum during her term of office.

When nominations closed for the election of representatives of the Members on the Council of the Institute and Museum, the Secretary had received seven nominations for the seven vacancies. Accordingly, no election was required.

At the Annual General Meeting the President therefore declared elected the successful candidates:

Mr Alan Berry
Dr Lindo Ferguson
Associate Prof. Jack Grant-Mackie
Dr Michael King
Mrs Peggy Phillips
Mr Murray Print
Miss Joan Robb.

The President also noted that Mr Garry Law had not offered himself for re-election, and would accordingly retire from the Council. Mrs Weight expressed the thanks of the Council and the members to Mr Law for his service.

Forthcoming Institute Lectures

Monday 13 November 1.00 p.m.

The Grip of the Moriori Myth

Dr Michael King

Dr Michael King is a distinguished historian who has written extensively on Maori and wider New Zealand history. Dr King was awarded the OBE in 1988 for services to New Zealand history, and has a close and valued association with the Auckland Museum, including his service as a Museum Council member.

The lecture will coincide with the Auckland release of his most recent book **Mori Mori: A People Rediscovered**. In this book Dr King clearly identifies who the Mori Mori were and where they came from, he attempts to clarify a number 'myths' that have surrounded the Mori Mori.

Friday 17 November 1.00pm

Mount Erebus, Antarctica: The Southernmost Active Volcano in the World.

An illustrated address by Phillip Kyle, Professor of Geochemistry, New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology.

Professor Kyle has spent 18 field seasons in the Antarctic, and was awarded the Antarctic Service Medal in 1978. He has published extensively on the geology and volcanic activity of the Antarctic.

Monday 4th December 1.00pm

Was World War I the Birth of a Nation? — A War Memorial Case Study

Dr Jock Phillips, Chief Historian N.Z. Department of Internal Affairs.

Dr Phillips was the first Director of the Stout Research Centre at Victoria University, which studies New Zealand history, culture and society. He has published a number of works including **A Man's Country** and is currently completing a book on New Zealand war memorials.